DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 190 SP 035 717

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TITLE Anomaly as Exemplar: The Meanings of Role-Modeling for Men Elementary Teachers.
PUB DATE [9 Nov 94]
NOTE 16p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; Elementary School Students; *Elementary School Teachers; *Males; Parent Attitudes; *Role Models; Sex Differences; *Sex Role; *Sex Stereotypes; Social Attitudes; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Role; Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Iowa

ABSTRACT

This study looked at male elementary school teachers and the role modeling component of their work in an effort to understand why the profession continues to be dominated by women. The study gathered data through guided collaborative interviews between the Fall of 1989 and December 1991 with 15 men currently employed as elementary teachers in Iowa. Analysis of the interviews explored ways these men negotiated the contradictions of role-modeling and worked at constructing masculinities appropriate to the job and congruent with others' conflicting expectations. Overall there emerged a social landscape filled with contradictions in which each advantage, based on gender, carried potential disadvantages. Other findings included the following: (1) participants sensed public perceptions of an important need for increased involvement of adult men in the lives of children; (2) school administrators, the participants reported, felt pressure from parents to hire male teachers; (3) role modeling was not only perceived as an important part of their work, but as work that "a" single male or a few can perform in an otherwise all-female faculty; (4) in practice, male role modeling emerges as a kind of optimistic ritual approach to solving social problems; and (5) participants felt a conflict in fulfilling the demand to be a male role model while doing work typically performed by women. (Contains 23 references.) (JB)

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Anomaly as Exemplar:

The Meanings of Role-modeling for Men Elementary Teachers

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My research focuses on men who are a minority of elementary teachers in the United States. The fewness of men teaching young children has been persistent, in spite of public calls to increase their participation. While both men and women work at all grade levels as teachers and administrators, the patterns of gender distribution are not random. By and large, "women teach and men manage" (Strober and Tyack, 1980). These social facts invite question.

Several years ago, motivated by essays from Michael Apple (1990), Sandra Acker (1983), Geraldine Clifford (1989) and others, I began reading and reflecting on teaching as "a feminized profession." What did it mean, I wondered on a personal level, to be a man "doing women's work?" And what could I, as a man, contribute to an understanding of teaching and schools as gendered institutions?

About the same time, I read Rosabeth Moss Kanter's sociological study: Men and Women of the Corporation , which challenged psychological and socio-biological explanations of the fewness of women in high status corporate management positions. Kanter discovered structures and processes in the corporate social organization itself, including structures of opportunity, and especially the power of relative gender proportions, which, she argued, accounted for the fewness of women in upper management positions. I wondered whether similar approaches could shed light on the persistent fewness of men in teaching, which is one way of framing "feminization."

Influenced too by Christine Williams' (1989, 1993) "backdoor sociology," I hoped to discover the gender landscape of teaching, not through research on women as majority and norm, but through the experiences of gender anomalies: men who were minorities or tokens (Williams had studied men nurses and women marines). I

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hypothesized that if such forces as Kanter had found also constrained men from participation in teaching, those forces would be most prominent where men were fewest and most anomalous. This led me to research men teaching in elementary school.

In this paper, I present a perspective on men who are elementary teachers, based on evidence from guided collaborative interviews. Between the fall of 1989 and December 1991, I conducted in-depth interviews with fifteen men currently employed as elementary teachers in Iowa. The fact that men are especially underrepresented in the elementary sector of the teaching profession offers them both advantages and disadvantages related to their gender. Because they are few in this occupation stereotyped as "women's work," their gender as it relates to their job qualifications becomes a prominent consideration. Being a man, or "doing gender" is itself a kind of work. They are aware of others' attention to their maleness, as well as of others' conflicting expectations and stereotypes of them as men.

In what follows, I explore some ways men "negotiate" the contradictions of role-modeling, work at constructing masculinities appropriate to the job and congruent with others' conflicting expectations. They must assert--and especially model--"being a real man" in ways that are personally sustainable, that have integrity, and that are also acceptable to those who evaluate them on this important job criterion and control their careers. At the same time, they feel challenged to discover in themselves genuine and appropriate motivations, as well as what others perceive as stereotypically feminine aptitudes for the sensitive, caring relationships necessary to effectively teach children.

What emerges from men's accounts of their experiences as elementary teachers is a social landscape filled with contradictions, in which each advantage, based on gender, carries with it potential disadvantages. One example which emerged in all interviews is the importance of male role-modeling, which men perceived to be an important part of their work as defined by others' expectations.

My title, "Anomaly as Exemplar: The Meanings of Role Modeling," is meant to suggest contradictions if not incoherency in sex role theory and sex role modeling in particular as a part of that theory, when examined in the lives of men elementary teachers actually hired to do it in schools.

Sex Role Theory and Role Modeling

Sex role modeling is a popularly accepted set of assumptions, derived particularly from the work of Talcott Parsons (1955, 1957). According to this theory, society comprises males and females who provide different and complementary functions. Maleness and femaleness are defined oppositionally. In the case of men, being a man means "doing nothing feminine" (Pleck 1987). Children, according to this theory, learn sex roles by socialization, especially "identification" with adult sex role "models.

Causes of social problems among adults can then be attributed to inadequate sex role identification in childhood. In the twentieth century a literature describing a "crisis of masculinity" persists: both hypermasculinity (male violence, rape, and other unrestrained aggression), as well as hypomasculinity (homosexuality, effeminacy, cowardice in battle, abandonment of family responsibilities). Sex role theory identifies both as social "problems," and traces responsibility to inadequate sex role "identification" in childhood. In the 60's and 70's, this conceptualization of deviant hyper- and hypo-masculinity in adult males was attributed by Biller (1967) and others to the absence of fathers in young boys' lives and consequent inadequate sex role "identification." Pettigrew (1964) and Moynihan (1967) elaborated the hypothesis to explain adverse consequences for adult African-American males. The "crisis" was summarized and popularized by Patricia Sexton (1973), whose book The Feminized Male: Classrooms, White Collars, and the Decline of Manliness faulted schools for causing the crisis, because of women teachers' undue influence on young boys and what she saw as the near absence of "real" men and the presence of effeminates as role models for boys in elementary schools.

If both Rambo and Pee Wee Herman are seen as dysfunctional in everyday society, there follows a need for more "real" men to model the sex role for boys. This rationale, along with generalized affirmative actions, has been a main reason for hiring men as elementary teachers.

Sex role theory and particularly the concept of sex role modeling has recently been systematically criticized, and I think demolished, by Joseph Pleck (1980, 1987), R. W. Connell (1985, 1987), and writers exploring the social construction of masculinities--"The Michael Kimmel School." Sex role theory cannot be empirically confirmed; it is a-historical, incapable of explaining cultural differences, and blind to gender as expressing power relationships. According to Connell and others, gender identity is not static and determined in childhood, but shifting over life course, manifested in different ways, situational and relational rather than normative and absolute, constructed, and, as West and

Zimmerman (1987) argue, something people "work" at. My research on men working as elementary teachers is informed by the second theoretical tradition. It examines men's perceptions of others' expectations about masculinity in this profession. These perceptions, in turn, shape how men behave, justify their behaviors, and negotiate masculinity, while engaged in "women's work."

"Sex role modeling" remains a widely accepted, unexamined, and I think incoherent concept, which underlies the public justification of a need for men teaching in elementary school. Sex role theory, theoretical and empirical limitations notwithstanding, is reflected in commonsense "explanations" of men elementary teachers. One commonsense hypothesis may be stated thus: "A few good men in this work are 'real men' who are relatively unmotivated to teach and relatively insensitive to children -- compared to women -- but who are temporarily willing to "serve time" in the classroom to qualify for competitive advantage in the more gender-appropriate work: the higher status and power positions of administration." The complementary alternative of this folk theory is, "Other males in this position may be sensitive to the needs of children and find fulfillment in 'women's work,' but are (it must follow) effeminate or unmasculine." Such folk theories of hyper- and hypomasculinity conserve the concept of exclusive sex roles by ignoring the actual lived experiences of men who do this work.

To understand the meanings of role modeling in the lives of men elementary teachers, we need to take into consideration too the importance of relative proportions of men and women in this social situation. As Kanter discovered, in her work exploring "the glass ceiling" which women experience in corporate administration, relative numbers themselves of men and women at work have important effects in conserving the status quo. It is possible that relative numbers as well as other structures and processes that constrain women from high status work in higher educationa and educational administration have complementary analogues which constrain men from work at "the bottom," as it were, of the occupational status hierarchy of teaching. I suggest the possibility that the two complement and reinforce each other, maintaining a status quo in which "women teach and men manage" (Strober and Tyack, 1980).

Men currently make up only twelve per cent of elementary teachers nationally. In spite of the so-called crisis of masculinity, affirmative action, the decline of the family, absent fathers, and the role modeling rationale, the proportion of men has actually declined over the last twenty years (Annual Estimates of School Statistics, 1988/9, 1991/2). In

addition, the twelve per cent are clustered in upper elementary grades four through six and in many elementary schools we find a single male teacher. In a word, men working in primary classrooms are rare.

What results is a gender landscape: men teachers are single or one of a few males who mave male gender in common with most elementary principals. But men are also tokens or minorities among overwhelming majorities of women teachers, with whom they share institutional position and work responsibilities. Men elementary teachers work within a contradictory social situation, where contradiction arises from gender, position in bureaucratic hierarchy, and the power of relative proportions.

The Meanings of Role-modeling: Colleagues, Townspeople, and Parents

What do we discover about the meanings of "role modeling" when we listen to the experiences and perceptions of men who are hired for this work? First is the salience of role modeling as an essential but unwritten expectation of the job for men. Men perceive gender role modeling as for them a more important component of teaching elementary school--when we think of the whole job--than is female role modeling for their women colleagues. The salience of role modeling as defing the work increases in any school setting as men are fewer. In schools where there is only a single male teacher, it is a paramount aspect of the work. Male role modeling is tied in men's perceptions to the breakdown of the family and indirectly to social problems of adult males.

Almost without exception, the men I interviewed sensed public perceptions of an important need for increased involvement of adult men in the lives of children, owing to the increasing number of single parent families, or families in which fathers have limited or distant interactions with their children. They sensed this from parents, and in particular from mothers who were single parents of children. Citizens and parents looked to men to provide discipline and to "role model" for children, and especially young boys. Listen to Tom and Richard.

> Q: Why do you think people are glad that men are teaching elementary school?
>
> A: I don't know. It's just maybe that the town wants more male teachers. I think that everybody, there's been so many females in elementary for so long, and they'd like to have more males there. I don't know if it's because of the divorce rate and all that (Tom, novice sixth grade teacher).

* * *

> I think administrators feel some pressure from the public that they would like to see possibly more male influence. . . . I think the public would like to see more men.
>
> Q: What evidence do you base that perception on?
>
> A: I guess just on speaking to neighbors, on what I've heard administration say, the comments parents have made to them (Richard, upper elementary math teacher, with six years experience).

Richard noted that principals may feel "pressured" by parents and the public to hire men as role models. He continued.

> Q: I want to get a better sense of the kind of things you hear people say that leads you to believe the public wants more men elementary teachers.
>
> A: Specifically, I can remember a neighbor who had a third grade boy who was always a screw-up, a live-wire, and she was looking forward to [him having a male teacher]. . . . The ones I've heard speak are mothers of kids that would like to see their kids have a male teacher (Richard, eighteen year veteran math teacher).

David concurred.

> I hear a lot of people saying that it's good to have men in elementary education.
>
> Q: You hear people saying this? Who do you hear?
>
> A: Oh, sometimes parents say that, sometimes the other teachers say that, or just people I meet. I mean, you know, it's more than an occasional thing. . . . Parents and sometimes teachers will say that. It's my sense that it's a fairly common belief (David, third grade teacher).

Several men drew specific relationships between the need for men as role models and the absence of children's -- particularly boys' -- fathers in their homes. They sensed they may have been advantaged in hiring as surrogate fathers, providing discipline and supporting the parenting efforts of single female parents.

> Q: Can you think of anything in your community that would explain why parents and those who do the hiring would want men teaching in elementary school now?
>
> A: Well, I think that one thing I've noticed is that there's a lot more single parents, households, kids coming from single parents, from living with their mother, and I think that, you know, it's not really our job to do it, but I think they look at it as being a male role model of . . . maybe disciplining them a little more than they get at home, maybe showing them that they can grow up to be someone fairly important.

I know in _____ there are a lot of single parent homes, and I think that's part of it.

I know a lot of my parents who are mothers come in for conference and say "so and so's really happy to have you for a teacher, because, you know, we're divorced," or "my husband's gone," or something like that. I think that's part of it (Phil, fourth grade social studies teacher).

* * *

Q: Why do men have an advantage?

A: I think because there are a lot of kids without fathers in the home, and so it's kind of nice to have a male authority figure in the kid's life, role model, whatever (David, third grade teacher).

Men conclude that something called "role modeling" is an important if informal requirement of them teaching in elementary schools.

A second meaning of role modeling as defined in practice is that it is conceived of as something that only requires one or at most a few men.

I had an interview just this last spring in the Chicago area where that was, I think, one of the main aspects. The woman principal told me there were no males in the school and they felt it was important to hire one. (Tom, seventeen year veteran art teacher).

* * *

Q: I've heard that role modelling is an important part of what you're hired to do, even though it's never written down in your job description.

A: I've talked to principals and I think that comment has been brought out. Part of it is that they're just looking for a male role model within the building. They see that as a plus (Jim, a twenty-four year veteran upper elementary teacher).

A single male in a whole elementary school is sufficient, or one in each of the upper grades four through six. Apart from setting men in splendid but, I would argue, dangerous isolation, this practice also implies that boys' sex-role identification, and therfore the need for gender role models, does not begin until age ten--a curious notion. In fact, what <u>does</u> begin for boys around age ten is "acting out," and "role modeling" in this case seems to be unreflective and incoherent code for social control.

As we have seen from interviews, male role modeling is an important part of the work. It is also perceived as work that "a" single male or a few can perform in an otherwise all-female faculty. A third "meaning" that emerged is that it is work which is not

well understood either by those hiring or by those hired to do it. Listen to Mark, a third grade teacher.

> I don't know what it means to be a male role model as a teacher. I say I do it, but I don't know what it means. I guess I say I do it because I have so many parents who say I do it.
>
> Q: Let me see if I understand. They think they need you because there isn't a father at home, and they think you're going to do something that otherwise a father would do.
>
> A: Right.
>
> Q: But you aren't really sure you're doing it?
>
> A: Right.
>
> Q: But they're hiring you to do it and valuing you for doing it?]
>
> A: Right. Yes, absolutely.

In practice, male role modeling emerges as a kind of optimistic ritual approach to solving social problems: No one knows what it is or how it works, but let's do it anyway. Steve, a talented and gifted program teacher perceived this meaning.

> Q: Do you sense that others, particularly parents and perhaps some administrators expect you to do something called male role modelling?
>
> A: Yeah. And I don't think those parents or administrators have a clear view of what they want. Their perceptions are: "We've had a traditional family organization pattern that looks like this [two parents]. We don't have that anymore, but we should still have that. Talking about children born into a single parent family, they're more likely to have emotional adjustment problems. . . discipline poroblems at school. A lot of those things. And I think this is one thing a principal can try to have control over. "Well, I can hire a male. I can't do much else. But perhaps hire a male and maybe that will magically help elevate things .

Men may gain an advantage in hiring because of public perceptions of the need to employ them as role models to make up for the lack of adult male presence in families. This apparent advantage in getting hired also carries with it disadvantages or conflicts which men discover later. They are uneasy about "surrogate fathering," and uncertain about what role modelling -- to the extent that that it is what they are hired to do -- really means.

<u>Contradictions in Role-modeling as Work</u>

Perceiving role modeling as such an importnat part of their job, men have to choose what it means, to "construct" a meaning and a masculinity that fits the social situation. Again men encounter an underiying contradiction. If the male role is defined oppositionally as "doing nothing feminine," what can men do to model "being a man" while employed doing work typically performed by women? Paradoxically, a recurring theme among the men I interviewed was their awareness of public perceptions, shared in some cases by women colleagues at their level and by male colleagues at higher grade levels, that teaching children was not an occupation a competent "real man" would willingly choose.

At this point I want to suggest that men's choices, the "meanings " of masculinity and the different male "roles" they in fact "model" can be conceived of as arranged on an axis of variation with two extremes. I will characterize the extremes, but want to avoid oversimplification and the error of what Connell calls "categorical" concepts of gender.

On one end of the axis are men who define themselves and their work in opposition and contrast to women elementary teachers. They work at "doing nothing feminine," modeling, in fact a conscious hypermasculinity. They perceive a need to guard against effiminacy and its popular association with homosexuality. Homophobia, which I define as men's fear of being thought unmasculine, is a component of their construction of masculinity (for further explanation of this line of thinking, see Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1987). "Doing nothing feminine" becomes increasingly difficult for men as the proportion of women doing the work increases. This may in part explain the increasing scarcity of men in lower elementary grades. Men could work with those younger children, but fear social sanctions and challenges to their masculinity. Duane, a veteran fifth grade teacher expressed this well.

> Q: How would it be different for you if you were teaching in first or third grade rather than in fifth?
>
> A: It would be tough for me. Maybe that's where the stereotype comes in. It would be hard for me. I guess it's not that I couldn't relate to the kids. I've taught them in summer school. I know I can teach them. But I'd have a difficult time. People look at a male first grade teacher as being a little bit . . . different. You know what I mean. Family acquaintances might see this as "strange."
>
> Q: So it would be difficult for you to work at that level?]
>
> A: Oh yes. Very difficult. (Duane, veteran fifth grade math teacher).

Duane, who also coached high school sports, noted that being a coach, because of the association of athletics with masculinity, helped men establish their legitimacy. But he sensed that for others, the feminine stereotype was problematic.

> Q: Are there things that if a man is not a coach, but he wants to be a successful elementary teacher and get along, that he can do that give him the same kind of entry?
>
> A: He had best not be the least bit feminine. I mean they expect a male teacher to be a man, whether he is a coach or not. If a man were perceived as feminine, I'm sure it would be a problem. You need to be a male role model. Be the opposite of being feminine. Now that's pretty subjective. I guess I see it as a man who is willing to be involved in male related activities. That is not to say that involvement in female related activities is wrong . . .but sports, fishing, rather than cooking. I don't think it's wrong to do the cooking and things that are traditionally feminine, but yet the kids need foremost for you the male . . . the traditional male type things need to be more preeminent.
>
> * * *
>
> Females are the motherly type that can get down with little kids, but males seem like . . . some of the men don't want to admit that they can go down to that level. That's what I feel from some of the people in town. I don't know if it's ego or what. . . . Sometimes males have the feeling that they have to act like a male; it's society's expectation, and you have to be tougher and stronger -- handle big kids and big discipline problems. I think some men might want to. I think there are male teachers who would want to. But they won't, because of the reactions they expect from other people. (Curt, fourth grade social studies).

In the absence of empirical evidence of the effects of role modeling on children, we seem to have here at least evidence that the role modeling paradigm affects and shapes the lives of the men hired to do it, causing them to exaggerate one aspect of maleness, while suppressing others which, in different social situations they might consider normal parts of their lives as men.

Men at this end of the role modeling axis emphasize male physicality, size, athleticism, strong voices. They typically form gender alliances with male principals in attempting to control both children, and to some extent, women teachers. They are aware, however, that children at times fear them. This constructed meaning of male role modeling carries with it consequent conflict with children, their parents, and nearly always with women colleagues, without whose consent and cooperation these men become isolated and ultimately "let go." In this case the concept of patriarchy as applied to schools--men

defining and controling the work of women--must be revised to accomodate the case of women, given majority status, defining, moderating, and controling the work of men.

At the other end of the axis are men who perceive their similarity with women colleagues, especially in their ways with children and their relations of power with male principals. They complain of being treated "like women." THey see their manliness as being consistent with acknowledgment of "feminine" aspects of themselves: sensitivity to children's needs, caring, playing with children on their levels, questioning children out of interest in what children bring, quietly guiding them. These men perceive and accept that their choice of "women's work" leads others to think them "feminine." I pursued this point with Curt.

Q: I want to return to your comment that elementary teachers are perceived as being feminine. You believe that there is such a public perception?

A: Oh, there is.

Q: There's no question in your mind about that.

A: Oh no. I mean it's like saying George Bush is the President.

Q: What does that mean being more feminine?

A: When men do what women usually do, people think it's a sissy activity.

Q: How does that perception affect you?

A: I think you just develop a thick-skinned attitude. What makes me angry is not so much this perception, as the low status and pay associated with work women typically do.

These men elementary teachers felt challenged to show sincere motivation in working with children, and sensitivity to children's limitations and needs. But this choice too, this "meaning of role modeling," carries with it constraint and danger. Men experienced conflict with principals when they allied with women colleagues. Again patriarchy in schools must be challenged to accomodate some men's control of the work of other men. In addition, apart from being thought unmasculine, acts of caring that are "natural" for women are dangerous and foreclosed for men. Over and over, men revealed a fear of being suspected of child abuse because of what they saw as normal gestures of concern for children.

A: At this age, kids hug more. They go up and hug their female teachers more.

Q: Than they do the male teachers?

A: Yes. And I don't really mind that, because they tell us not to even show any affection, because nowadays people think a man is molesting kids if it happens. And . . . but it hurts. You see a little kid going up and hugging one of the women teachers and you're saying, "That'd be nice to get that hug," because it makes you feel better. Then they'll come up and they do surprise you and hug you and you feel better about it (Ross, a beginning fourth grade teacher).

* * *

A: It seems to me easier for a woman teacher to become involved in and comment on a child's emotional state. than it is for men. It's easier for a woman to be more supportive than it is for a male.

Q: Are you saying that in dealing with children's emotional issues men feel more constrained?

A: More constrained, definitely. Both can tell when a child is upset, but the male's range of appropriate responses is narrower . . . . An example is on the playground when a child is hurt. A male teacher in contact with a child . . . those gestures are always smaller. They convey just as much meaning, but they can't be on the same scale as a female's. (Mike, talented and gifted program teacher).

Men felt they must overtly demonstrate care for children and sensitivity to their emotional needs. But behaviors that are perceived as natural demonstrations of these qualities in women are off limits to men who feel them as equally natural but as inviting suspicion of abuse. The vehemence with which men expressed this constraint was surprising. One participant recalled the indelible impression of his first awareness of this danger to men in elementary teaching.

I had a mentor in college, and he told me one time, I remember our conversation about my decision to change my major to elementary education. He cautioned me in a very serious manner about what devastation it could have on my career if this ever happened to me. [If what ever happened?] If there were any false charges against me in regard to sexual molestation or anything. And I had to be really careful of it, and that I needed to think of that. . . . I don't know why he told me this , but it had an incredible . . .I've never forgotten the conversation.. And I have a policy. I never touch a girl unless it's on the top of the head. I never touch them. I never touch them anywhere. I never even hand them anything. . . . Boys, I don't have any rules about boys . . . .I don't have any concerns there, but the girls I do. I used to resent it, but now I just see it as a sort of fact of life -- never let a girl stay after school alone. If I'm taking kids home, make sure I leave the boys off last. You know, just normal precautions. (David, fifth and sixth grade)

Fear of demonstrations of caring or special attention as a form of commitment to children's needs was a consistent theme in men's reflection on their relationships with children.

> Q: To what extent do you think men elementary teachers become aware that when they give extra attention, or whatever the child needs, that that can be misconstrued?
>
> A: Oh, definitely. It's much easier for a woman to give a gift to a student and not have it misinterpreted . . . . I read about people losing jobs. I used to have kids sit on my lap, little kids. I don't touch anybody now, and I know this other man I work with is very much the same way.
>
> Q: So this has definitely constrained your practice.
>
> A: Absolutely. It puts a real cramp on the teacher-student relationship. And women don't have to be afraid of that.
>
> Q: How do you feel about not being able to touch kids as a teacher?
>
> A: I guess I haven't touched anybody for so long that I don't think about it anymore. But I had to consciously, oh, maybe ten years ago, step back, very . . .very consciously stop doing certain things. [You never give a child a hug.] No. Especially not if I was a single man. (Terry, fourth grade social studies teacher)

Young single men, whose time and energy are not shared with their own households, and who therefore have more opportunity to demonstrate enthusiasm for as well as commitment to children and the work are particularly suspect.

> Q: How is being an elementary teacher different for a single man and a married man?
>
> A: You need to be a lot more careful as a single man. All grade school men have broken the male stereotype somehow. [Married men, because they have a spouse, give more assurance? They're not going to be risky with children?] Right. Definitely. (Duane, fifth grade math)

* * *

> Parents are generally more leery of male teachers. If this was a young woman staying after school [to offer special help or extra activities] , it would be no big deal at all. She would be "dedicated." "Isn't this great? She's willing to give this time, and do these things, clubs and athletics, and so forth." But this young single guy, who does a great job, he should be commended for all the time he is putting in. But it makes people a little nervous. (David, fifth and sixth grade team teacher).

Again, this end of the role modeling axis shows signs that men's defininitons of the situation and the meaning of role modeling in fact shape their own behaviors. An irony here is that the social situation in elementary school warns men off from modeling the very definition of manliness--patient caring, sensitivity, and responsibility in the lives of

children--that, were male role modeling a valid concept, might result in more intact and child-supportive families.

Conclusion

Nearly all men interviewed perceived male role modelling as an unwritten but crucial component of their job description, a widely held expectation and criterion of success. Many men were uncertain, when asked, how to role model beyond "doing what men do." They sensed others' conflicting definitions of the male role itself: an axis of masculinities arrayed between the disciplinarian surrogate father engaged only in "unfeminine" activities, or the feminine nurturing empathic companion of children. Men revealed themselves steering a course between equally dangerous extremes, having witnessed other men who erred in their navigation and "raised questions" or were "let go." In addition, some men perceived the irony of "exceptional" men--those choosing "women's work"--being role models of maleness: anomalies hired as exemplars.

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